

In light of recent reports of violence in parts of Mexico, we would like to remind American citizens of some steps for personal security you may want to take. We all need to be careful in dangerous urban environments and when traveling the highways.

## **SECURITY HINTS**

- Schedule that are the most predictable leave you the most vulnerable. Be unpredictable. When possible in both your work and your social schedules.
- Always be aware of your surroundings
- Avoid choke points in travel. Be wary of diversions.
- If you are being followed or harassed by another driver, try to find the nearest police station, hotel, or other public facility to call the police. Never lead the person back to your home or stop and get out.
- Whenever possible, do not have a set day for shopping, errands and personal needs.
- Never give out your personal information such as family members and household staff names, addresses and telephone numbers in an open setting.
- Ensure all of your family members are briefed on security measures.

## **PERSONAL SECURITY WHILE SHOPPING**

- Stay alert and be aware of what's going on around you.
- Park in a well-lighted space, as close to the store entrance as possible and away from dumpsters, bushes, or large vehicles. Be sure to lock your doors, close windows, and hide shopping bags and gifts in the trunk. If shopping near your home, consider returning home to drop off gifts. They'll be safer there than in your car.
- Never leave your car unoccupied with the motor running or with children inside. A car can be stolen in seconds.
- Avoid carrying large amounts of cash; pay with a credit card whenever possible (but make sure you watch the person handling your credit card. Don't let them walk away with your card and make sure they only swipe it once in front of you). Keep a record of all your credit and debit card numbers in a safe place at home so you can report lost or stolen cards by their numbers.
- Carry your keys, cash, and credit cards separate from each other.
- Remember exactly where you parked your car. Make a mental note or write it down so you will know.

- If you need to use an ATM, use one inside the mall or some other well-lit, populated area.
- Be aware of your surroundings as you come and go from your car. Have your keys out and in your hands so you don't have to fumble to find them in the parking lot. Don't be shy about asking mall or store security personnel for an escort.
- Shopping with children? Teach them to go to a store clerk or security guard if you get separated. Also, have a family "code word" in case you get separated. This word can be given to security staff so that your child can discern friend from foe.

### **RESIDENTIAL SECURITY HINTS**

- All entrance, including services doors and gates, should have top quality locks-preferably deadbolts.
- Keep your windows and doors closed and locked at all times.
- Don't leave any keys "hidden" outside your home. Leave an extra key locked in a safe in your office.
- Keep your doors locked even when you or your family are at home. If you are not expecting any deliveries or workmen, do not open your doors for them.
- Use your alarm system, if you have one.
- If you have windows grilles and bars – review your fire safety plans. Do not block bedrooms windows if they may be used for emergency egress.
- Keep at least one good fire extinguisher on each floor. This is especially important in the kitchen. Show family members and domestic help how to use an extinguisher.
- Keep flashlights in several areas within the house. Check the batteries often.
- Keep shrubbery and bushes trimmed and low – do not obscure windows and doors.
- If you observe any unusual activities – report it immediately to local authorities.

## **PERSONAL SECURITY WHILE TRAVELING**

- Notify someone of your travel plans.
- Remember that when traveling you are most vulnerable to attack. Take special care and remain aware of your surroundings at all times. Don't drink to the point of intoxication – especially where you would not be able to defend yourself or not be aware of your surroundings.
- Use special clothing or accessories to hide your passport, money, or credit cards. Keep the majority of your funds in traveler's checks and hidden. For your visitors it is recommended that they make copy of their passport to carry and keep the original in your home/office. The use of a money clip is recommended. If you are robbed, you may lose the money in the clip but will retain important credit cards and documents (make copies and store them).
- Consider the use of a fanny or waist pack, worn with the pack in front. These are much safer than carrying a handbag and are more difficult for pickpockets to steal from. If you are wearing a backpack, consider wearing this with the pack in front also.
- Be cognizant of local customs, laws and regulations.
- If stopped by a police officer or someone claiming to be a law enforcement officer, ask for credentials and try to write down a name and badge number for future reference.
- Obtain and carry with you the telephone numbers of the local police and the nearest U.S. Mission. (Note: In Hermosillo, the U.S. Consulate switchboard number is: 662-289-35-00). For your guests, pass on the phone numbers for you and the U.S. Consulate. If you have a cell phone that you don't use often, perhaps they can carry it for the time that they are visiting for use in case of emergency.

## **CARJACKING PREVENTION TIPS**

- Be aware. When you are out in public, be aware of your surroundings.
- When driving in potentially risky areas, don't allow yourself to be pinned in. Always leave enough space to pull away quickly.
- Don't be distracted by talking on the cell phone, eating, etc. Losing your focus on the road and/or your surroundings could make you an easy target.
- Keep your vehicle locked at all times and windows closed.
- When approaching your parked car, have your car keys in hand. Check the surroundings area for suspicious persons near your car or following you. If you see a suspicious person, do not attempt to get into your car but quickly walk to the nearest public place and call for help.
- Don't make yourself an even more attractive target by leaving your purse or other valuables in plain view.

- Avoid parking in unsecured areas and places that will be unlit at night.
- Always be prepared to take evasive actions. Play the “what if game” and think of what evasive action you would take if a person next to you suddenly brandished a gun.
- Be alert for motorcycles or bicycles stopping next to your car, especially if there are two riders.
- Always keep your car well maintained and make sure you have plenty of gas. You don’t want to become stranded in a dark, unfamiliar or questionable area.
- If you are forced to pull over due to mechanical problems, be wary of people who stop and offer help.
- Keep your house keys on a separated ring from your car keys.
- Never roll down your windows to answer questions. This could be a pretext for a gunman to take your vehicle.
- Most important, if a gunman wants your vehicle, give it up.

### **IF YOU ARE A VICTIM**

- Don’t resist. Comply with the criminal’s demands. Don’t be a hero, your family wants you home.
- Be a good witness. Record a suspect’s description, license plate number, vehicle info, etc....
- Contact the local police and the U.S. Consulate immediately.

As always, if you or family members have any security related questions and/or concerns; you are welcome to contact the U.S. Consulate at 662-289-3500.

Americans residing or traveling in Mexico are encourage to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department’s travel registration website, <http://travel.state.gov> where the current Worldwide Caution, Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings and health-information resources can be found. Up-to-dated information on security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S., or, callers outside the U.S. and Canada, a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

Additionally, remember to carry the contact information for the U.S. Consulate General Hermosillo, which is located at Calle Monterrey 141 Poniente, Col. Esqueda, Hermosillo, Sonora, C.P. 83260. Phone: 52-662-289-3500. Hours M-F, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.